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ABSTRACT

This conference report discusses four viewpoints on the changing makeup of the family unit. Reasons for these changes in the family (i.e., communes, unmarried couples, unisex marriages) were seen as deeply imbedded in the philosophical, religious, psychological, and moral components of life and in the technolcgical and urban civilizations within which contemporary life manifests itself. The four viewpoints, presented by a sociologist, an economist, a clergyman, and a psychotherapist, deal with the different perspectives of "Accelerating Family Styles." While the sociologist focuses on the importance of the interrelationship of family life and socioeconomic resources, the economist deals more specifically with the impact of fast-moving changes of the economy. The clergyman discusses the primary values which Americans have held in the past and suggests that life style is now emerging as the most important quality of a person. The family is seen as the fundamental social institution by the psychotherapist, but he points to the inability to communicate as the most crucial problem to any family life style. (Author/PC)

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AND

PERSPECTIVES

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Maryland Council on Family Relations

Thirteenth Conference

April 26, 1973

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FORWARD

The Maryland Council on Family Relations is an organization concerned with basic issues relating to the family. Its purpose is to provide opportunities for organized groups, agencies, members of allied professions and individuals interested in family life to plan and act together voluntarily for the advancement of marriage and family life by means of consultation, conferences, and cooperation on the goals, needs and problems of marriage and family living.

The Council's chief activity has been a Spring Conference which each year is devoted to the discussion of a timely subject. The Thirteenth Conference was held on April 26, 1973, in Towson, Maryland, with the theme, "Accelerating Family Styles and Perspectives." Discussion which centered on the current modes of family life and their implications for the individual and for society, was moderated by Mrs. Lyle Blain Gray, who was in charge of the programs.

The Council is publishing the substance of the discussion in order to make it available to those who are interested. Appreciation is extended to Mr. Daniel Moss, Recording Secretary, who recorded the speeches, and to Dr. Geneva Ely-Flickinger, Past President, who edited the material and prepared it for publication.

Mrs. Vivian S. McIntosh
President

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Maryland Council on Family Relations

ACCELERATING FAMILY STYLES AND PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

Dr. Geneva Ely-Flickinger
Towson State College

Within the last several decades all of life has been undergoing transformation - to such an extent that change is a common phenomenon of the Seventies. Thus, even such an established institution as the family, long a bastion of traditional values and modes of living has yielded to social forces and adopted accelerating life styles. One change has precipitated another until the accepted patterns of interrelationship among individuals in the home now embrace several which had until recently been unacceptable.

Reasons for these changes are deeply imbedded in the philosophical, religious, psychological, and moral components of life, and in the technological and urban civilization within which contemporary life manifests itself. All these factors have combined to produce a sociological framework and climate which is sympathetic to new patterns of family life.

Some formerly uncommon or taboo patterns which now enjoy varying degrees of acceptance are communes, unmarried couples, and unisex marriages. Communes in Western society vary in their life style, some adhering to monogamous marriage and others following divergent practices. In basic ideology they can be traced to Plato and in actual practice in America to such communities as Robert Owen's New Harmony. They are not new to the American scene.

Unmarried couples, likewise, have long existed within society, but they were not condoned in the West,

until the recent insistence of the young that freedom of choice include freedom to live intimately with a sexual partner whether or not a ceremony has sanctioned the union. An extension of this insistence, stemming from the greater tolerance of homosexuality, is the unisex marriage with sanction of ceremony. The latter is still extremely rare and not on a par with the other two.

Basic to all such patterns is a focus on the human being as an agent free to join another or other free agents in a living style 1.) designed to promote the growth, development, and well-being of each person who is a party to the living arrangement and 2.) presumably conducive to wholesome interaction and felicity within the larger social community. Condoning such expansive freedom is new to Western society. Insofar as it focuses more on inner human need and potential than on external objects, it has value, but it has yet to be tested in the crucible of experience. These new life styles have, therefore, been the subject of extensive dialogue and debate.

Pursuant to a consideration of the significance of these "Accelerating Family Styles and Perspectives," the Maryland Council on Family Relations invited four persons to present their views at its 1973, Spring Conference. These four viewpoints comprise the substance of this, the Council's third publication. They are given by a sociologist, an economist, a clergyman, and a psychotherapist.

Mr. Melville Pugh, the sociologist, opens the discussion by focusing on two aspects of the theme: 1) the interrelationship of family life and socioeconomic resources and 2) the emergence of newer family styles which are now viewed as alternatives to the usual family style of monogamous marriage. First, he points to the basic importance of family in securing a job, in determining social status, and in providing such benefits as "security, comrade-

ship, and dependency." Then he describes five alternatives to monogamous marriage, each of which has attracted its own proponents and practitioners, and each of which has been accepted to some extent within society today.

Mr. Edward J. McNeal, the economist, deals more specifically with the fast-moving changes of the economy. He points to the impact of inflation, advertising, automation, ecology, and consumerism on the family, no matter what the style of living, and advocates education in the area of personal money management and elementary economics.

Reverend Mr. David H. Poist, the clergyman, discusses the primary values which Americans have held in the past, and he suggests that life style is now emerging as the most important quality of a person. He points to the religious significance of emphasizing life style - its relationship to Jesus; its potential release of the abilities to create, and to cope with, changes; and its focus on the development of "wholeness and integration" as well as belongingness. The new primary value of life style, therefore, in his view, holds out to the institutions of the church, government, and family - each of which has felt the impact of "the brokenness of our culture" - some prospect of success in the quest for "wholeness and relationship."

Mr. Tom Thompson, the psychotherapist and counselor, considers the family to be the fundamental social institution. He notes some of the changes which have taken place, most notably in the roles of mother, father and child, and in living styles. In particular, the changing role of women is causing a "dislocation of power" in the family. He sees money, child rearing, and sex as the most pressing family problems on the surface, but he finds inability to communicate to be the most crucial underlying problem. If we are to solve these problems and if families are to be able to live with changes which are occurring, in his

view, certain educational programs will have to be initiated or strengthened and sex role stereotyping will have to be eliminated. If these programs are developed and promoted, he predicts that a strong institution will become even stronger.

The Maryland Council on Family Relations offers these four viewpoints as a preliminary statement on the subject of family styles and perspectives. Other views are needed to present a complete picture. The Council hopes that the substantive issues will be discussed further and that the dialogue will be a continuing one.

A SOCIOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT

Professor Melville W. Pugh
Acting Chairman, Department of Sociology
Morgan State College

In commenting on the topic "Social Structures and New Perspectives," I have chosen to present a series of ideas and propositions which I hope will stimulate your thinking with regard to the nature of family and marriage in American society.

One of the interesting facets, I think, of family life, is that the first taste of it is experienced involuntarily and I think that we can not say that of any other social institution. This probably has some significance for the difficulties that we have in discussing the various family and marriage experiences and in trying to develop family models (models of interaction between husband and wife, among the siblings in the family, and between the parents and the children, and of course among the families). We are placed in a situation really, where there are three families--the family of the father and the family of the mother and then the family of the child, so that there is a kind of triad, which in each of our life experiences tends to be synthesized and organized in our own thinking and in our own experience, and perhaps makes for some idiosyncracies in the various postures that we take in regards to family life.

Hylan Lewis has commented in regards to family life: ". . . The answer to the problem of family disorganization is not one of inculcating marriage and family values in young couples; there is ample evidence that they exist. The critical test is to find ways and means for the young adult male to meet the economic maintenance demands of marriage and family life." Actually, Professor Lewis, a sociologist himself, has put his finger on the theoretical

notion most central to the understanding of social change in family structure and social interaction in modern society. This notion is that of the socioeconomic resources.

What is the nature of the connection between the industrial system and the family system? First, the family does not specifically control job or job rewards for its members. The ideal in the contemporary industrial system is that the person is given a job on the basis of his ability to meet its demands and the same standards are applicable to all who hold the same job. The family doesn't guarantee or give jobs to its offspring except on the basis of merit. But even where nepotism occurs, the person's promotion and rewards are based on merit.

Second, the family significantly influences opportunities and achievements for its offspring. Society expects the family to prepare its offspring to compete within modern society. Consequently, the preparation is not equal. Often, thos better prepared come from homes where the parents themselves have certain social advantages.

Third, the conjugal family functions as the conventional social agency through which social status and prestige are assigned. Inasmuch as family name and tradition count little in a highly mobile society, selective consumption symbols take on an increased importance. The result is that this condition serves to give a sense of worth and respect to those displaying the symbols.

Fourth, the conjugal family is the basic unit which provides expressive satisfactions such as security, comradeship, and dependency. It may be that Israeli kibbutz couples enjoy expressive benefits without concern for the three preceding factors; it is probably not quite so simple for those participatin in an achievement-oriented society. An account of today's college couples who "cohabit" more or less permanently without the obligations of marriage.

indicates that finances become the "stickiest" aspect of their "idyllic" experiment. Once the societal goals of personal achievement and success are accepted, there occurs an inevitable convergence of all four factors.

It has been noted that the American nuclear family is currently undergoing sever stress. Consequently, alternative social structures and new perspectives are being experimentally proposed and tried in an effort to produce an integrated social system which can provide the satisfactions its members expect of it. Can monogamy always satisfy the desire for variety, challenge, and romance?

One alternative to monogamous marriage is adultery. One form of adultery is wife swapping, mate swapping or group sex. This has received little attention among social scientists, although it is estimated that one to ten million people are involved in mate exchange. It is possible to describe at least three typologies of swinging. The first is open and closed swinging. Closed swinging means that the two couples exchange partners and then go off separately to a private area to engage in sexual intercourse. Open swinging, on the other hand, means that the couples, at some time during the evening, engage in sexual activity together, either in the same room or on the same bed.

The second type of swinging is the party, which can be arranged in several different ways. Certain persons in the area are known as organizers; they plan and promulgate swinging activities. These parties are often held in a private home. Couples are invited, and sometimes each couple is asked to bring another swinging couple.

The third type of swinging is called a threesome. A review of advertisements in swingers magazines indicates that many of the swingers advertise for either couple

or a female. Often, these triadic relationships are of relatively short duration; i.e., three to four weeks.

A second alternative to traditional monogamous marriage is known as "living together." This refers to a man and a woman living together as a married couple without a legal marriage contract. Such is the case with Chick and Terry who have been living together without a marriage license for almost three years. Five or seven years ago, this would have shocked the community. In 1973, it is a universally recognized social trend.

"My parents don't mind my living with Terry," says Chick. "They have come a long way. Once upon a time, they didn't approve of long hair." Terry admits, "My family kind of wish we would make it official."

Marriage to someone you love is a tremendous act of faith. Giving yourself to one you love without marriage takes even more guts.

The commune is a third form of social system which has emerged as an alternative to the culturally approved family structure. In a commune, several persons live together and consolidate their labor and resources in much the same manner as one finds in a family. The modern commune movement is still too multi-faceted to permit complete description of all its dimensions. Even the simplest question, "What is a commune?" elicits a variety of answers. However, the generic label that seems to fit the objectives being sought is "community."

Today's urban commune appears to be much more frequent and less stable than its rural counterpart. The primary reason is that there is a minimal commitment. The available convenience of joining an urban commune doesn't make for good marriage and

family relationships. The minimal commitment required sometimes attracts irresponsible and immature persons. The ethos of a number of urban communes has been described in the phrase,"lateral insurgency." Rebellion that would overthrow the established social system is not intended. On the contrary, there is a withdrawal into a micro-culture away from the traditional social institutions.

A fourth alternative to traditional marriage is to remain single. This social role seems to be acquiring a more legitimated status from the view of the larger society. In terms of numbers, it is estimated that there are 41 million single adults in the United States. This figure includes 15 1/2 million males who have never married and 3 1/2 million divorced and widowed males.

The 70's brought about a decline in the "couples" participating in American night life and hostessed parties. Concomitantly, there was an increase in group behavior among the singles. It is now common to read of nightclubs welcoming single groups, of restaurants catering to singles clubs, and of hotels advertising singles weekends. Now, for the price of admission, a single person can join a group activity knowing he or she will meet some new persons as well as be entertained. Single persons can follow any or all roads today and any or all lifestyles.

A fifth alternative to traditional marriage currently being discussed is called open marriage. The basic idea is that the marriage contract can be rewritten as a commitment to individual freedom and mutual growth. By being open with one another concerning needs and expectations, married couples can modify their marriage contract to suit their unique requirements. Couples are challenged to learn to communicate freely with one another in order to arrive at a consensus for living. Eight guidelines of open marriage are suggested: (1) living for now and realistic expectations,

(2) privacy, (3) open and honest communication, (4) flexibility in roles, (5) open companionship, (6) equality, (7) identity, and (8) trust.

Finally, perhaps there will be wider and freer variations in marriage and family styles in the future. Nevertheless, in my view, the marriage of the future will be a hetero-sexual friendship, a free union of if a man and a woman who are companions, conrades, partners, and sexual lovers.

The monogamous family will continue as an extremely viable social institution and it will remain the major social group involved with long-term intimate sexual interaction and child-rearing in the American society.

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AN ECONOMIC VIEWPOINT

Edward J. McNeal
Executive Vice President
Maryland Retail Merchants Association, Inc.

> If man runs after money, he's money mad; if he keeps it, he's a miser. If he spends it, he's a playboy. If he doesn't get it, he's a ne'er-do'well. If he gets it without working, he's a parasite. If he doesn't try to get it, he lacks ambition; and if he accumulates it after a lifetime of hard work, he's a fool who never got anything out of life.

These statements may be exaggerations, but they indicate confusion, and, if ever we were in a period of history when there was confusion about our economic life, it is today. Our lives are accelerating at such a devastating pace that I think not any of us knows where we are going. We have insidious inflation, which is really gripping at the heart of the family unit. We have a Republican President who doesn't know what to do about it, but I'm not critical of him because we have a Democratic Congress who doesn't know what to do about it. (So I'm being nonpartisan about the subject.) I just know that it is the single most serious thing that affects the family unit, and I think we have to be deeply concerned about it.

Moreover, television is creating an insatiable desire for more goods than ever before, and this profoundly influences the family unit as to what it wants for itself and what it hopes to achieve. Automation, another factor in our lives today, has brought many wonderful things with it, and yet it is taking jobs from people. The growing interest in ecology, which I applaud very much, nevertheless

is having an unexpected impact on our everyday life. Two examples illustrate this impact, each in an area vital to the family. First, I met a meat packer the other day. He told me that it was his opinion that one of the principal reasons why meats are so expensive is that higher standards are being applied in the meat industry to meet the ecology crisis. Second, if you drive a nineteen seventy-three automobile with the emission control standard, you know how many miles you get to a gallon of gas, and, if you live far out and you work downtown or if you have to travel in your job, you learn what ecology is costing you every day in gasoline alone. I'm not suggesting that we don't have to attack the ecology crisis, but perhaps in the process, we haven't examined the impact on our economy and on the family unit.

The same can be said of consumerism. In the truth in lending, truth in packaging, truth in credit, truth in this and truth in that, all of which are very constructive and which I applaud, we still must recognize the fact that all aspects of consumerism have a price tag and they are having an effect on the family unit.

Two additional factors must be mentioned. Most of us have the tremendous, exciting opportunity to travel. We can go any place. And we have at hand a tremendous knowledge explosion which is alluded to in Future Shock, a book I found not pleasant to read, but certainly meaningful. What we must realize is that these explosions in travel and knowledge are having an impact on our economy and on our family values as well.

All these economic factors have an uneven influence on people in our society. For this reason, a difficult question arises. How can the affluent family teach their children to have values and how can we explain the great disparity that exists and seems to be getting even wider between the affluent

family and the family that does not have? I make no attempt to answer the question; I merely raise it.

Now, turning to the labor market, we see that there are more and more women who want and need to work. In some instances, the wife has to work if the family is to be able to exist at a level above poverty, because the cost of living is so high. In other instances, the woman is the head of the family and must work. In both instances, the matter of extending credit to women is crucial.

Let me discuss the matter of credit extension. It has an important influence on every family unit. We have many people coming to our office every day. Last year we had over 10,000 people who had been denied credit for one reason or another. There is much misunderstanding in this field and yet so much depends on the ability to establish credit. So much depends on the family unit's ability to acquire a washing machine or a refrigerator--items that we take for granted. Without the opportunity to buy on credit in these areas, many a family unit cannot acquire these necessities. People with bad credit ratings are at a disadvantage, but they unfortunately think that an obligation that they failed to fulfill years ago has the ability to go away. Yet it stays with them. They are never able to pay their debts and they are never able to get ahead.

Grantors are accused of arbitrarily denying credit to women. This becomes critical to the family unit that is headed by a woman, as many are today, particularly in the inner cities. The notion that the grantors do not want to extend credit to women is just not accurate. No credit grantor, whether it be a mortgage lender or a bank financing an automobile or a store financing routine purchases such as clothing and furniture, wants to deny credit to any-

one. The incentives are the other way, for, until stores can extend the credit, they don't sell the merchandise and hence they don't make any money. They do, however, insist on some time-honored principles concerning the character of individuals and their capacity to fulfill their obligations, and, if individuals don't have the capacity, willingness, and the disposition, credit is not extended.

As an officer in the Credit Bureau, I am concerned with the extension of credit to families. We run a credit reporting business for this region. Last year we sold over a million credit reports, and I know from experience that one of the most important ways to promote tranquility within the family is to have adequate personal money management. The same things that were taught when we were in elementary school about savings and home ownership and investing in credit are vital today. The family unit must capture these things and get a grip on its own personal money management situations. If family members don't adequately manage their own resources, whatever they may be, it will be difficult to have a tranquil family. Therefore, young men and women in high school must be taught personal money management--how to be selective in their purchases, how to distinquish between good merchandise and bad, and how to distinguish between a good credit rate for an item purchase and a bad credit rate. This is why we are enthusiastic about a joint resolution that was passed by the 1973 session of the Maryland State Legislature that requests the State Department of Education to begin studies to mandate a course in consumer education in all the high schools of the State. Such a course can have more influence than all the other laws that have been passed. A proliferation of laws is not the answer; they are coming at such a fast rate that we can't administer them. Education is the answer.

In conclusion, if we are going to be able to solve the serious social and economic problems in the latter part of the 70's and in the 80's, one of the main areas on which we have to concentrate is educating individuals in the management of their own affairs—in such elementary knowledge as what money means, how to buy, what to buy, how to be selective, and where to buy. I am convinced that, in our desire to produce an educated society that can attack the broad social issues, we have overlooked teaching some of the very basic and elementary economics that can contribute more to the stability, well-being, and the happiness of the family unit than anything else.

A RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINT

The Reverend David H. Poist
Executive Director
Koinonia Foundation, Baltimore

Being a clergyman following an economist, I feel like rendering unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's. But, first, as a member of an extended family situation in Baltimore, I feel that I should really be talking about that situation. I shall, however, merely state that Koinonia Foundation is a 22-year old educational center and also an experiment in community living.

As to the subject under discussion, I shall begin by presenting a very brief theory of American history, which is related to the concept that Americans are really interested in "top values" or primary values. Americans have always been caught up in major values. The major value in the founding of America was the family unit and the extended family. Homesteading was very important; family connections were important. Because the founders were in a new country, their ties with their families, their relatives, their ancestors were profoundly the link with the past.

In 1800 America experienced the Industrial Revolution. With the Industrial Revolution the primary value of our culture moved from the family and the extended family to money. With the Industrial Revolution came machines, and with machines came cities, great wealth, and also great poverty. Money could buy the machinery that could pick the corn that used to keep the family homestead going.

In my view, money remained the primary value of the American culture until after the Second World War. After the Second World War there was another change. Education became the primary value. Returning G.I.'s went back to school; colleges expanded rapidly. In the 1960's the only thing that most Americans could agree on was a statement such as "education is a good thing."

It is my theory that we are in a period of history in which we are moving away from education as a primary value to a new primary value: life style. The emergence of the importance of the life quality or the life style of a person has tremendous ramifications in terms of the collection of individuals in families or communities. It has tremendous spiritual and religious implications because it is closer to the religious traditions of the West than either money or education is. From my study of the Bible, I find it interesting that Jesus did not have much family. Some people even thought he was illegitimate. He did not have money and he did not have much education. He did have a life style, and, on that score, there are a lot of correlations within the religious realm that one can make in terms of the new emerging primary value in our culture.

This new primary value of life style has something to do with our ability to develop a quality of living which is able to deal with the radical pace of change in our world. Just think of the world that we live in: the commercials of President Nixon going to China during the reelection period and now the President in a totally different mood in the midst of the garden of scandal. What a contrast! The new life style may help us deal with such rapid changes, for it has something to do with one's ability not only to be sensible and to account for one's self but also to relate to and be sensitive to others, all of which have a great deal to do with the development of families. Moreover, this new life style has something to do with man's infinite potential. It may facilitate the use of our abilities, a move that should prove beneficial, for some

behavioral scientists say that we use not even 85 to 90 percent of our potential during a lifetime. And they are probably right.

My religious reflection on the emergence of life style as a primary value in the American culture is that central to it is a quest after an individual experience of wholeness and integration and the experience of the individual wanting to feel that he belongs in relationship with others, that he has a family, that there is a home for him, that he belongs in history. Basically, the theme of our twentieth century is a theme of brokenness, of estrangement, of being scattered and anxious and not knowing where or who we are. Gertrude Stein said, "The Twentieth Century is the time when everything cracks, when everything breaks down." Our brokenness has been outwardly manifested by wars and depressions, atomic bombs, Vietnam, the deaths of heroes, Watergate, and so forth. Inwardly we have experienced the age of anxiety, the brokenness of personal lives, the incredible increasing rate of mental illness and divorce. Also, during this period of brokenness we've seen the calling into question of all our institutions.

Let us look at several of these institutions. The one that I am most familiar with is the Church. It is absolutely at a loss as to what its role and function in the latter part of the twentieth century are supposed to be. The Church thought that it was supposed to offer some kind of moral and social leadership fifteen years after the civil rights movement had begun. It thought that it was supposed to offer some kind of peace leadership after we had fought two world wars.

The government as an institution right now is broken. We are all afraid that people will not believe in it anymore, especially not in the President. In the sixties, we saw young people by the thousands saying that they would not fight a needless war in Southeast Asia. Now, in the seventies, a man

who stood for the return to law and order is caught in the midst of the greatest and, in a sense, the most simplistic of political scandals.

The family, which was built on homesteading and "honoring our father and our mother," is broken apart by divorce at rates that we have not known before. In the sixties, thousands of people couldn't communicate with their folks and had to take drugs and drop out. Yes, the basic theme of this century is a theme of brokenness, of estrangement; and the vision, the hope of people is found in the quest after wholeness and the sense of belonging; a sense which says, I belong with myself, I belong with these people who are my family, I belong in this place, on this planet, and this is my home.

The story of the crisis in the nuclear family is well known. It is probably our major social unit today as opposed to what used to be the extended family. The manifestations of the family's problem have already been mentioned and can be seen very simply. As supporting evidence, we need only to mention the divorce rate. Moreover, the problems between children and their parents called in years past the "generation gap" are apparent in the hollowness that you see or feel when you sit down with someone of a different generation, and you have nothing to say to one another. The women's liberation movement, which may perhaps become the greatest movement of them all, is directly related to the role in which the nuclear family - and consequently the culture - has placed the woman. So it is apparent that the brokenness of our culture is manifested in the brokenness of the nuclear family.

One can see this also in the brokenness and the estrangement of neighborhoods and of the Church as a community or extended family institution of the past. Vance Packard in his book, A Nation of Strangers, says

that the mobility that our culture has created is perhaps now becoming one of our greater liabilities. We all have cars, but we have no place to go. We have no home, no family, in the true sense. Moreover, at the same time we are polluting ourselves together. The mobility, to which I just now referred, the ability to move families a dozen times in twenty years, works for big business, but it makes it impossible to create a sense of belonging in a neighborhood or in a community. As I said, the Church was originally a gathering place, almost an extended family, where people really did try to support one another, both in need as well as in prayer. It was the place where the great events of life were celebrated--being born, dying. Now the Church, at least from my vantage point, is in a period of searching, searching almost aimlessly for its function and role in culture.

On the part of the Catholic Church and my own Episcopal Church, divorce is still officially taboo. I do not speak for the Church, but as a minister I say it is a more moral act for a person to end a marriage that is demonic and uncreative than it is for the marriage to continue in the demonic and uncreative relationship. Regarding the sexual revolution, some elements of the Church are beginning to say some important new things. We know that things have changed. At first we thought that we had only a sexual attitudinal revolution,and not a behavioral revolution. We know now that we have both. I was reading an interesting article in the Alternative Journal about all the changes, and the really tragic thing about the sexual revolution is that after the young or married couple have had sex, they do not have anything to say to one another - they are empty. There are unmarried single people living together who are acting in a more moral and more responsible way than a lot of people that are married and are carrying on the family game. The Church in its understanding of covenant and contract has a great deal to say, and it can speak to the whole idea of contracting what one expects out of marriage relationship.

My theory is that we live in a century of brokenness, or estrangement. My hope or faith is that individuals will seek after the ancient romantic quest of wholistic living, of the integration of the many aspects of life; and that with this individual experience, man can then begin to go beyond the mere wholistic to experience relationships with others. The contemporary quest after a new primary value--that of life style--can strengthen man in his quest for wholeness and relationship.

A PSYCHOTHERAPIST - COUNSELOR VIEWPOINT

Tom Thompson
Psychotherapist and Family Counselor
Family and Children's Society, Baltimore City

What is the oldest law of human kind? The law that every culture has? It's the law against incest, a law which promotes survival. Every single culture has that law. Whenever you hear that we have nothing in common throughout the world, remember that people hold the incest taboo in common, no matter what the culture is. We also have mankind's oldest invention, and what is that? The wheel? Perhaps, but, along with others that could be mentioned, the family is a good candidate for the oldest and actually the first basically social invention of mankind. I might say that it was invented by stages and that necessity was the mother of this invention. The incest taboo and its observance had something to do with the establishment of the family.

The first stage of the social invention called the family was the creation of the role of mother. At some point, mankind-humankind went from biological figure to mother. Then, at a somewhat later stage, it added another piece to this invention - the father. The incest taboo had a great deal to do with the creation of these two stages of the family. At a much later date, the institution of marriage was established as a binder of sorts on this social invention. Somewhere along the way the roles of mother and father were more firmly established and along with them the role of children.

We must realize how powerful is the social invention of the family that undergirds and underlies all our current crises. Neither the family nor marriage is going to go away

very soon. They are very powerful, and, while I agree with the assessment that this is the century of brokenness-of brokenness and alienation and anxiety - we should remember that we are dealing with something that has been around since the beginning of time and something which has been perfected, shaped, and changed over many-literally millions - of years. Changes that we see right now are not going to blow it away.

One of the most interesting experiences that I have had recently was the opportunity to do a show on the "Larry Angel Show" with Dr. Jessie Barnard, who, I think, is one of the leading exponents on family and marriage in the United States, perhaps in the world. She made the point very clearly (and better than I can make it) that family and marriage are not going to go away as an institution, and that family is not going to go away. They will undergo changes, changes which to us will seem troublesome, because they will trouble us as individuals and as a culture. They will be threatening, but they probably will not be as basic as we fear they will be, and we probably ought to welcome many of the changes that are going to occur in family life-changes in marriage, in family styles, and perhaps even in divorce.

There is another factor affecting the family, one that Dr. Barnard stressed- the divorce rate. In a number of my talks recently, including college lecture tours and speeches before women's groups, I have mentioned the divorce statistics. Without stating them now in detail, let me call your attention to one significant fact. According to the divorce statistics, dangerously close to half of the age group from about 18 to 22 or 23 will be divorced within 10 to 12 years. The statistic is somewhere around 46 or 47 percent right now <u>for that age group</u>. Note that I did not say that half of all people getting married are going to be divorced. I said that, for this particular age group, 40 or 45 percent and, in many states more than 50 percent, are going to be divorced.

What is the significance of such a statistic? Does it mean, as a lot of popular magazines are saying, that the family is breaking up? No! The next time you hear that, remember it is a surface judgment. We should look at the matter much more closely. In my view, the family is far stronger than we realize right now in our culture. The fact that we are going through a great transition so quickly makes it appear to some that the family is weak. In my view, the facts do not bear out such a conclusion. I have seen in magazine articles in the last month that the family may not be here in 1990. That is utterly ridiculous. It will be here in the year 2700; it will be here 500,000 years from now. And I believe that it will be here in very much the same form in which we see it right now - which, by the way, is the form that it's been in for a very long period of time. I admit that I am over-emphasizing this point, but only to show that there is security within the present family structure.

What are several elements that are at the basis of rising divorce statistics? There are many reasons why the divorce rate is so high, and they have little, if anything, to do with family structure as such. It has already been stated that, in a great many families, money is considered a pressing problem. I agree. Child rearing and sex are two other problems. In my experience in counseling, these three lead the way as the key problems mentioned on the surface. However, communication and other basic problems may lie below the surface. The problem of communication is crucial. As one of my favorite authors has said, in our age it's not sex that raises its ugly head: it's love.

To return to the question just raised, we are undergoing a tremendous revolution in the position of women in our society and in every society on earth. It is the biggest single change, in my opinion, that is taking, place, and it could be one of the main factors causing dislocation in families. Let me give you the results of an interesting

study that Dr. Barnard made. (A number of people have challenged the results, but when they look into the facts, they realize that they are accurate.)

A study was made in which people were asked a number of questions, but hidden in the mass of questions was one set designed to find out who is happy in American society.

> Married women were asked if they were happy; they said yes. Unmarried women were asked if they were happy; they said no. Married men were asked if they were happy, they said no. Unmarried men were asked if they were happy; they said yes.

What Dr. Barnard was able to establish beyond the shadow of any doubt was that all four groups were lying. They told what is called white lies, or socially conditioned responses. One is supposed to be happy if one is a married woman and supposed to be unhappy if one is a unmarried woman, and one is supposed to be unhappy if one is a married man and one is supposed to be happy if one is an unmarried man. So one gives the socially accepted response, if one is asked. However, on the basis of morbidity, mortality, the number of times in the doctor's office, the number of times hospitalized, the number of times seeing the family counselor, or for that matter the psychiatrist or psychologist, and on the basis of the number requiring hospitalization for mental illness or suffering from cancer and other diseases- on the basis of all these factors and many more - married men rank low, unmarried men rank high, married women rank high, and unmarried women rank low. So much so, that when the statistics are examined, they raise questions concerning their meaning with respect to human relationships.

I make this point because we have been living for quite a while in human history with a dislocation between the sexes. It's a dislocation which once went the other way

when woman was very powerful in the family and the family structure. And roughly at the time of the change from a nomatic to an agricultural society, there was a dislocation of power in the family moving very much from the female to the male. We are at an interestingly important juncture in history right now where that dislocation of power in all societies, and not ours alone, is about to be changed. I don't want to focus on it too much, I think, however, in making suggestions about living with it in the family, I would say it is very important for us to do several things that we are not doing at the present time. All are educational, but I shall not suggest where this education takes place. Although I think the schools should be doing some of it, there may be other ways in which to do it.

First, we should have courses in the schools to train people to handle money. This is a practical necessity and, as a family counselor, I've seen that the lack of this ability is one of the outstanding deficits of knowledge within the family. In my view, there is nobody who does family counseling that would not agree with my judgment in this matter.

Secondly, we must have more education on human sexuality, in the schools and elsewhere, certainly in the home, because in our so-called liberal age there is a tremendous lack of knowledge about sex organs and the way they operate let alone, the much more important area of human emotions and feelings and relationships with each other. Our knowledge of human sexuality is very poor. Again, all family counselors or counselors of any kind would, I think, agree with this statement. Education in this area is, therefore, very important.

Thirdly, we need a course, at some point in school, or we need education in the home (or wherever it may be promoted) on what it means to be a person. There is a growing body of literature that youth are finding by them-

selves. It's interesting that we're not the ones who even know about it so that we can suggest to them what it is. However, there are many books that put forth no particular theological, political, or other area of opinion, and, if young people of late high school age, and college age were to be exposed to such books, they would gain a sense of what it means to become and to develop as a human being.

Only after we understand and develop personhood, can we attack another problem that is at the root of so much of our marital breakdown today, and that is the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage. Dr. Barnard states (and I quite agree) that in our culture marriage is basically a master/slave relationship. You can't attack the root cause - of this relationship - not the single cause, but the big root cause - until you attack something that is even more important, and that is what it means to be: to become, to grow, and to develop into a more fully expressive, more free, and also at the same time a human person.

Finally, we need sex education, but it should, in my opinion, be part of something broader, such as family life education, and that is a subject on which we've hardly started. We need to teach what the roles of mother and father and child are, and we need to change our present concepts about these roles. We do a great deal of sex role typing in the education that we currently give about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. One problem with the education that we currently give about this role patterning is that it is totally disorganized. It isn't led by anybody. Moreover, it's extremely destructive to human beings. A million little hints are given to every child (male or female) about what he or she is supposed to be or not supposed to be - sex role typing. That again is probably one of the things that plays into the syndrome of the wrong kind of male/female relationships in

our culture which in turn plays into the wrong kind of male/female relationship in marriage which in turn is attached to a great deal of our marital breakups.

The tightest cage that any one of us has in this culture in my opinion, is the sex role typing cage. And think how many things that's related to. It's related to the expression of one's personality, how one relates to other men or women to whom one is not married, how one relates to one's spouse, one's religion, the way one uses money, the way one thinks about money. There is nothing that it's not related to, in my opinion, and if you want to know where I think the gold is hidden with respect to strength in the family, it may be in a correction of sex role typing more than in anything else.

But I want to return to the same note on which I started. While not for one moment wishing to dilute the idea that the twentieth century is an age of anxiety and brokenness, I still think that one of the things that undergirds society is the family. Do not expect too little of the family in the last quarter century and for the next 500,000 years. It's a very strong institution. It's been around for a long time and it will be around for an untold amount of time. There will be changes. There may even be very basic changes in structure, but don't expect them to occur soon.

Let us take the family which was devised in times so ancient that we don't even know when and let us try to do as much as we can to strengthen its parts, to strengthen what we put into it. It is already strong, the best weapon we have. Let us know that it is strong and that it undergirds us in our efforts to be strong as a nation, as a culture, and as a people who are moving toward a unified humanity.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ELICITED DURING DISCUSSION

The appropriate expressions of feminity and masculinity can be realized by persons only

> After we know better what it means to be human, and
> After we get rid of our currently accepted definitions which have stereotyped sex differences.

The true differences between the sexes are hidden from us because our current expressions of masculinity and feminity are probably false. As someone has said, every woman has some masculinity in her, and every man has some feminity in him. There is no one perfect proportion; any two people who get together must work out for themselves the proportion which makes their adjustment ideal, or at least acceptable to them.

—David H. Poist

There is a definite relationship between human sexuality and identity. When we fail to inform people about their human sexuality, we fail to give them some of the important knowledge ingredients about what it is to be a person.

—Toni Thompson

The process of becoming a person involves establishing identity as a female or as a male, but it is more. It involves also coming to terms with the divine within one's self. Each person must discover what she

or he is truly meant to be, and religion can help in this search.

—David H. Poist

In assisting young children to learn who they are, what their capabilities and potentialities are, some young couples who are more liberally oriented are favorably disposed to using anatomically correct doll babies. Child psychologists are not in total agreement on this, but it is something to consider in our concern for the development of more positive relationships among persons who constitute family units.

—Melville H. Pugh

Homosexuality, at whatever rate of expression, has been around since the beginning of time. It is practiced in many cultures at a higher rate of expression than in ours. By comparison, ours is a very low rate. We now concede that adults may express themselves in the way they choose so long as they do not bring harm to anyone.

—Tom Thompson